



Pop Culture by FangirlingStrangerThings

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Summary: A week after the Snow Ball El finds herself overwhelmed by references and quotes to movies that she doesn't understand or know. Desperate to impress Mike before the party's first sleepover she seeks out Max for help in learning about 1980's Pop Culture. Contains Elmax friendship, Mileven and Lumax fluff, and poor Hopper being repeatedly told off by one Maxine Mayfield.

1. Part One

Pop Culture

AN: Hi all! I'm back with another two shot and this one is courtesy of one of my readers '*TheClown*' who came up with this great prompt of Max teaching El about pop culture, so I can't take credit.

So major spoilers for 80's movies!

As well as the beautiful friendship of Elmax, this story also has Mileven and Lumax fluff which I'm sure isn't a problem ;-)

It follows the timeline and canon characters of *The Life You Deserve* but you can read this as a standalone as it takes place a week after the Snow Ball.

Enjoy!

Pop Culture Part One:

December 1984

It was a week after the Snow Ball and while El wasn't usually allowed to leave the cabin, today was one of the rare occasions when she was dropped off at Will's house whilst Hopper went to work.

These rare days of being with her friends was a highlight for El, especially because she got to spend time with Mike which didn't revolve around staying in the four walls of the cabin.

The party all gathered in Will's living room and got to work decorating his Christmas tree whilst Mike explained Christmas to El. She didn't particularly understand it all, but the idea of presents sounded fun.

"I promise next year when you're allowed out properly, I'll show you all the cool things about Christmas," Mike said sweetly, his eyes warm and loving as he laced their fingers together whilst their friends were busy arguing over tinsel and fairy lights.

El grinned bashfully at Mike, her cheeks pinking when he smiled at her like that, like she was *everything*. His words made her sigh slightly, longing for the day when she would be able to go with Mike into town or go over to his house which she missed more than she suspected was normal.

"I can't wait," she finally whispered, the yearning for freedom so evident in her tone.

"Me too." Mike replied in a small huff of frustration at not being able to go on dates yet with his girlfriend. They had only been official for a week, but he wanted the world to see the amazing and beautiful girl who had chosen to be his.

El frowned, hating to see the disappointment in Mike's face, it made her chest feel tight in pain. She reached up with her free hand and carefully lay her palm on Mike's cheek, he instantly leaned into her touch and his eyes fluttered closed.

"Soon." El said determinedly. "We will be able to go out soon."

Mike whined, "yeah, but when is *soon*?"

El bit down on her lower lip to stop herself from giggling. Mike sounded like...well he sounded like *her*. She was just glad that she had a better answer for him than what Hopper used to say.

"The summer. We can go out in the summer."

Mike's dark amber eyes opened, and he heaved a sigh, nodding his head slightly in understanding even though he shared her wish of wanting *soon* to be a lot quicker than the summer.

Mike raised his hand and placed it gently over El's which was still cupping his cheek. His thumb stroked over her skin gently and she felt a rush of love hit her heart, warming her body.

"We survived 353 days, I know we can make it six months. Besides we can still see each other all the time at the cabin and when Hopper brings you here." Mike reasoned, cheering them both up.

El smiled in relief, her hazel eyes locked on the amber eyes she

adored. They were so beautiful, and she found herself immediately captivated by them, just like she was with the stars. Before she even realised what she was doing, she found herself closing the small space between them.

Mike's hitched breath hit her face just before she closed her eyes and pressed her lips against his. With his mouth against hers, the softness of his lips and the sparks of electricity that ran wild in her body, El felt like everything was right with the world.

Mike smiled against her lips and kissed her back, applying more pressure with his mouth that made her want to melt on the spot. Every single kiss with him was special, a precious memory that El stored in her heart forever. This particular memory would also include –

"Ew! You guys are *gross*." Dustin groaned whilst Lucas and Max fake gagged, and Will cringed.

Mike pulled away from the kiss first, his cheeks bright red from embarrassment of their friends having watched the kiss. He stuck his middle finger up at them, flustered and warm whilst El giggled and squeezed his hand.

Lucas made kissing noises and sniggered whilst untangling the fairy lights and Dustin shook his head in exasperation. "Can you two do that in private?" Will and Max nodded in agreement from where they were putting baubles on the tree.

Mike scowled and moved back over to the tree with El's hand still in his. "I'm allowed to kiss my girlfriend you know." He said with frown. "It's not exactly a crime."

There was a sharp intake of breath from the whole party before their heads whipped around to look at the couple. El blinked in confusion wondering what had peaked their interest whilst Mike was so red she could feel the heat radiating off his face.

"*Girlfriend?*" Lucas asked, a shit eating grin on his face as he looked between El and Mike.

"When did *this* happen?" Max chuckled playfully, her attention no longer on the tree.

Mike was looking down at the floor and shuffling his feet but El just smiled, thinking about how special the moment had been when Mike asked her to be his girlfriend. "At the Snow Ball," she answered breathlessly, positively beaming with pride.

"I *knew* it!" Will gasped, smiling happily.

Dustin grinned, his eyes gleeful as he took in Mike's awkwardness. "I personally would like to know *why* our Paladin has been keeping such an important secret from us all."

Mike huffed and finally looked up at the party, Dustin in particular. "Because I knew you would act like this!" He exclaimed, his free hand waving through the air in exasperation. "You're gonna tease us and be all weird."

"It's our job to tease you," Max said grinning, "because you're the sappiest, love sick couple any of us have *ever* met and will ever meet in our whole life."

"Sappiest?" El asked in confusion looking between Mike and the rest of the party.

"Sappy, it's like when you're so in love that you're all romantic and act like a fool at times." Will explained before going back to putting baubles on the tree.

"Basically, if you look it up in the dictionary Mike's face will appear next to it." Lucas explained whilst the others all laughed, and Mike gave him a glare. El smiled with intrigue, making a mental note to look at her dictionary later.

"Can we drop this now?" Mike pleaded in annoyance. "The bottom line is that El's my girlfriend and if I wanna kiss her then I'm going to. I don't care *who's* around."

Dustin snorted, "wanna repeat that to Hopper?"

"Yeah right," Mike muttered rolling his eyes.

Max smirked, "no you should, he's standing right behind you."

Mike almost jumped out of his skin before whirling around with El in tow. Just as Max had stated, Hopper was standing in the door way looking extremely unamused, his arms crossed showing off just how muscular he was. Mike gulped but didn't let go off El's hand.

"Hi dad," El said brightly not understanding why there was a sudden heavy tension in the air.

"Hey kid," Hopper said giving El a warm smile before the expression wiped off his face the moment he stared at Mike. An intimidating look took over complete with a raised heavy eyebrow.

"Please continue Wheeler. What were you saying about kissing my daughter and not caring about who's around?"

Mike looked like he wanted to be sick and stumbled trying to make words. "Um...I...what I *meant* s-sir...is um...."

"It's okay dad," El cut in, her voice full of assurance and understanding. "I don't care if other people are around when Mike kisses me. I like to kiss him too." She said brightly, not realising that this wasn't the issue.

Mike groaned quietly, and Hopper closed his eyes hoping for patience whilst the party sniggered.

Her dad rubbed at his forehead for a moment and then exhaled. "Yeah that's not what I meant kid. But let's have this discussion another day okay?" When El nodded in confusion, Hopper continued to speak. "I'm going to help Joyce with lunch now and Nancy called you Wheeler, she wants you to call her back." He added pointing at Mike who was still avoiding his piercing gaze but nodded in response.

When Hopper left, Mike exhaled sharply like he was trying to breathe in gallons of air into his lungs. He ignored his friend's laughter and mumbled to El that he was going to call Nancy back before scurrying off down the hallway, still bright red.

"Oh man," Dustin chuckled, wiping at his mirth filled eyes when El

came over to help him with the tinsel. "And he's *your* boyfriend!"

El looked up at her friend and couldn't help but grin, her cheeks blushing with exhilaration. "He is." She whispered, feeling giddy and happy.

"What did Nancy want?" Will asked Mike the moment the Paladin walked back into the living room.

El looked over at her boyfriend, happy to see that he looked a little calmer than when he had left to call his sister. Mike walked up to her, smiling sweetly and helping El to untangle a piece of tinsel as he answered Will's question.

"She said our mom and dad are going to visit our grandma this weekend with Holly to drop off Christmas presents." Mike explained, his eyes bright with excitement. "Nancy's in charge and she said I can have you guys over for a sleepover if you want?"

As Mike looked around at his friends who were all nodding and murmuring their agreement, El's face fell. It was yet another occasion when she would miss out on being with her friends, with her *boyfriend*. Mike caught her expression and laced their fingers together, gently squeezing her hand.

"I thought maybe we could ask Hopper if you can stay over too?" he said hopefully before his cheeks blushed. "Seeing as Nancy is going to be in the house I don't see why it would be a problem."

El gasped in excitement, looking between her boyfriend and her friends who were all grinning in agreement. "Can we ask him now?" she requested breathlessly, unwilling to let herself get too excited just in case her dad said no.

"Yeah definitely," Mike said nodding with a wide grin.

"We should all go," Dustin insisted.

"I agree," Max added. "He can't say no to *all* of us."

"It's not like it would be Mike and El alone," Lucas reasoned

innocently before giving a bright red Mike a teasing wink.

"Plus, he's with my mom right now, she'll *make* him say yes." Will supplied before elbowing Dustin in the ribs when he did his signature purr.

The party were all buzzing with excitement as they hurried out of the living room and headed to the kitchen where they could hear the sound of Christmas songs playing on the radio and the occasional tinkle of laughter coming from Joyce and Hopper who were singing lowly along with the tunes.

Hopper was making sandwiches whilst Joyce was stirring a large pan on the stove filled with soup. They both looked up as the hoard of young teens hurried into view.

"Why do I feel like this is an interrogation?" Hopper grumbled, frowning as his eyes flickered from El to the rest of her pleading friends.

"Can I sleep with Mike this weekend?!" El blurted out, her excitement too much to bare. What she didn't count on was the immediate spluttering that came from both Hopper and Mike and the booming laughter from her friends.

"*What?!'*" Hopper exclaimed, his eyes furious as he turned his murderous glare onto a mortified Mike. "You've got ten seconds to explain yourself Wheeler!"

Mike gasped, his face hotter than the sun. "S-She doesn't m-mean... she *meant*...uh, not s-sleeping *with* me..." he croaked, too horrified to think straight. Thankfully help came from an unusual source.

"He doesn't mean that Hopper," Max said calmly whilst all of her friends turned to her in surprise. Mike and Max hadn't gotten along since even before she joined the party, and while Max now knew that the reason Mike was so cold towards her was because he thought the boys were trying to replace Eleven, they still weren't *friends* just yet. So, it surprised Mike the most that she was sticking up for him.

Max continued, not even bothered by the fact that her friends were

staring at her. "Wheeler's parents are away this weekend and Nancy is going to be in charge. She asked if he wanted a sleepover with all of his friends, and we *all* want El to be there too." Max turned her gaze onto her first ever female friend who was smiling back at her gratefully. The red head met the chief's gaze again. "She *deserves* this Hopper."

"Please dad," El practically begged with her doe eyes.

"Come on chief," Lucas beseeched the gruff man.

"We'll make sure she doesn't sleep with Mike – "

"DUSTIN!" The party and Joyce shouted in exasperation.

Hopper was frowning, a mixture of fears and worries swirling in his brain which wasn't helped by the continuous innocent pleading of El's eyes.

"Please Hopper," Mike begged, still clutching onto his girlfriend's hand. "Nancy will be there the whole time chaperoning us all, and no one outside of the party, and you, Nancy and Mrs Byers will even know she's at my house. And Max will be there too, so El won't be the only girl at the sleepover," Mike added, before turning his eyes onto the red head as if to confirm she was coming, which she nodded politely in response to.

"Alright, alright," Hopper said tiredly running a hand over his face. "Stop your pleading." He removed his hand slowly, his eyes on Joyce for a moment who gave him an encouraging nod of her head and a gentle smile that made his heart flutter. He cleared his throat and turned back to El. "You can go kid, but only because Wheeler's parents won't be there and because Nancy is chaperoning."

"Really?" El gasped in disbelief, her excitement on the edge of a cliff, ready and waiting to jump.

Hopper chuckled lovingly at the wonder in her sweet face and nodded his head, leaning forward to ruffle her curly locks. "Yes, El you can go."

She squealed in excitement and lunged at her father pulling him into

a tight hug whilst Mike and the rest of the party all whooped in jubilation, patting each other on the shoulder in a 'good job' kind of manner.

"Right, now that the excitement is out of the way," Joyce chuckled, ladling soup into bowls. "Let's eat!"

Hopper and Joyce stayed to eat in the kitchen whilst the whole party all now in high spirits gathered around the dining room table eating their soup and grabbing sandwiches whilst they discussed plans for the sleepover. El having had no experience of a sleepover listened in avidly, wanting to soak up every detail.

"We've got to show El Star Wars this weekend," Dustin said eagerly giving their Mage a friendly grin which she returned.

"Definitely," Mike said happily, his tone filled with excitement. He turned to his girlfriend, holding her hand gently under the table. "You'll love it El, Star Wars are my favourite movies. Well *The Empire Strikes Back* is my favourite..."

"Nope, it's got to be *Return of the Jedi*," Lucas argued, before stuffing his mouth with another sandwich.

"Yeah but *A New Hope* is good too, that's the one that started it all off!" Will reasoned looking around at the group like they were crazy.

El just frowned in confusion, looking from Mike to the boys to Max who was rolling her eyes. "They're not even *that* good," the red head muttered to the exasperation of the boys.

"You *know* horrors are more my thing," Max said casually, just shrugging her shoulders at the boys disapproval of her statement. "Like come on, is there anything better than Michael Myers? Or Freddy Krueger?!"

Dustin snorted, "yeah there's a million things better than *them*."

"Like who?" Max argued, crossing her arms and glaring at her curly haired friend.

"Like Luke Skywalker, Han Solo, Princess Leia, *Darth Vader*!"

Max rolled her eyes, "back to Star Wars again. Is that seriously all that you *like*?"

"No," Dustin scoffed in defiance. "Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom was freaking awesome!"

"It was brilliant," Mike reasoned weighing in on the conversation whilst El stayed quiet, her mind nearly exploding with all these new words and names. "But I think Gremlins was the best movie this year."

"Yeah me too," Will added with a nod before scrapping his spoon around his now empty bowl.

"No way," Lucas said shaking his head. "Terminator was *way* better."

"Well that's not even the point," Mike sighed in annoyance before turning to El, his irritation over movies completely drifting away as his eyes softened at his beautiful girlfriend. "The point is that El gets to watch Star Wars! The greatest movies ever made." He said happily, his smile so bright that it made El smile despite how nervous she suddenly felt to like the movies that Mike liked.

"Yeah you're going to love them El," Will said with a reassuring smile to his new friend.

"She'll *try*..." Max muttered rolling her eyes again.

"Do. Or do not. There is no try." Dustin said in a squeaky voice making the boys all laugh and for Max to groan in frustration, whilst El just blinked in frustrating confusion.

"Do you think it makes you cool quoting Yoda?" Max asked Dustin in exasperation.

"The fact that you *know* I was quoting Yoda just proves you're just as much of a nerd as we are." He teased with a shit eating grin whilst Max blushed slightly in embarrassment.

She coughed awkwardly and changed the subject looking over at Lucas. "Come on stalker, the arcade is calling our name."

"Hey!" Dustin called in annoyance as Lucas eagerly stood up from the table, a flustered grin on his face. "Why haven't we been invited?" He said gesturing around the table to the rest of the party.

"Because they want to be *alone* Dustin," Mike teased playfully, fluttering his eyelashes at an embarrassed Lucas whilst El giggled.

"Whatever Wheeler," Max shrugged her shoulders nonchalantly and reached for Lucas hand, "you still win the heart eyes competition." Mike rolled his eyes in amused annoyance as the party all said their goodbyes and watched Lucas and Max leave.

The boys and El moved back to the living room watching cartoons and talking about their favourite characters in *Transformers* whilst El tried to grasp the concept of alien machines. She bit her lower lip in embarrassment, suddenly feeling so different from her friends. El knew that if she asked Mike to explain all of this then he would happily have done so, but she couldn't help but want to impress him, not wanting him to know that all of things he loved went straight over her head.

El couldn't help but be secretly relieved when Hopper said it was time for them to go home, even know her heart sank at saying good bye to Mike. They hugged tightly, El laying her head against his shoulder, closing her eyes and breathing in his homely scent, allowing it to soothe her tight chest.

After they broke from their embrace Mike checked that Hopper wasn't looking before he leaned in and pressed a sweet lingering kiss to El's lips. She smiled against his mouth before they broke the kiss, allowing the sparks of electricity to light up her body.

"I guess I'll see you on Saturday then," Mike sighed softly, his eyes flickering over her face like he was trying to remember every aspect of her features.

"Two days," she whispered in response. "We will make it."

Mike grinned and nodded his head, leaning in to press a tender kiss to her forehead. "We will." He promised against her skin, his warm breath making a shiver run down her spine.

"Bye Mike," El said gently, squeezing his hand before she finally started to walk backwards away from her boyfriend.

Mike gave her a warm grin, his lips quirking high up on his cheeks and his eyes wet and bright. "Bye El, see you Saturday."

On the drive back to the cabin El was outwardly quiet whilst her mind was alive with all the new words she had heard from the party. How confident they had all sounded and enthusiastic their smiles had been whilst they talked about the things in life that clearly meant something to them. El frowned feeling behind and lost all over again.

She wanted to know what they were talking about, she wanted to *impress* Mike. Make him feel like she wasn't falling behind, that she knew what she was talking about.

"You okay kid?" Hopper asked, his heavy brow lowering into a frown, the silence too much to bare as they got closer to the cabin.

El didn't look at him, keeping her forehead against the glass but she nodded slowly. "Yes," she whispered thinking hard about how she could rectify her situation. There was only one other person who might be able to help her, another girl that seemed to like to impress her own boyfriend just as much and also knew what was going on in society.

"Dad?" El asked abruptly turning away from the window to look at the chief who glanced at her before looking back at the road.

"Yeah kid?"

"When we get home, can I call Max?"

Max got home from the arcade three hours after leaving Will's house. She had sent Lucas home with a blush on his cheeks from their lingering kiss and a smirk on his lips from the wink she gave him before getting onto her skate board.

She was relieved to see that Billy wasn't home and headed into the silent house, opening the fridge and rooting for something to eat when the phone started to ring. Max ignored it the first time,

assuming it would be one of her mom's friends from California who wanted to drone on about how much she was missed in book club or some weird shit like that. But when the phone rang immediately afterwards Max decided to answer, having gone through enough drama in the last few weeks to know someone was needing something urgently.

"Hello?" she asked cautiously, her blue eyes narrowing slightly in suspicion.

"Max?" came a soft and unsure voice that the red head was starting to get used to.

"El?" Max asked in confusion, surely she meant to ring Wheeler right? "You okay? Do you mean to ring one of the guys?"

"No, I wanted to speak to you," El said before exhaling a relieved breath at having gotten through to Max.

"How can I help?" The red head asked, relaxing slightly and leaning back against the wall. She couldn't help but smirk, "are you needing boy advice or something?"

El was quiet for a moment before she spoke, "kind of..." she admitted before the words finally flooded out of her. Max listened intently as El expressed her embarrassment over not understanding any of the references that the party had been talking about earlier and that she wanted to impress Mike with her knowledge of the things that he loved.

"Oh El," Max said sympathetically, immediately feeling like an idiot for not noticing El's uncomfortableness earlier in the day. "We would *never* want you to feel embarrassed about not knowing what those movies were. We understand why you don't know..." She reasoned, allowing her body to shudder slightly as she realised that everything Lucas had told her in the arcade that time about El's upbringing was true.

"But I *want* to know," El sighed heavily. "I feel so stupid -"

"You are *not* stupid!" Max immediately interrupted shaking her head

in disapproval. "You are really smart El, brave, strong and bitchin as hell!" When El giggled in surprise Max grinned happily that she could make her friend laugh.

"Anyway, it's not like you don't know who Madonna is or Cyndi Lauper..." Max reasoned playing with the cord of the phone for a moment.

There was a deafening silence, the longer it went on for the more Max's eyes widened. "Please," she choked weakly. "*Please* tell me you know who Michael Jackson is."

"Um...?"

"Oh my GOD!" Max exclaimed in shock. "Put Hopper on the phone *right now*!"

There was scrambling, rushed words and hurried footsteps and suddenly the gruff voice of the chief could be heard across the phone line. "What's so damn urgent Maxine?" he huffed breathlessly.

"Are you *insane* chief?!" Max practically shouted in indignation, pacing around the kitchen as far as the corded wire would allow.

"Excuse me?" Hopper asked, surprised at the teenage girl's tone.

"What the hell were you teaching El all this time?! She doesn't know who Madonna is or Cyndi Lauper," Max exclaimed before swallowing heavily and closing her eyes in despair. "Chief, she doesn't even *know* who Michael Jackson is..."

"Who?" Hopper teased whilst Max screeched in frustration.

"Right that's it," Max decided, nodding to herself frantically whilst she continued to pace. "If you're not going to teach El about pop culture then *I* will. Pick me up from Lucas's house in two hours."

"But – "

"No chief! Two hours on the *dot*!"

"Okay," Hopper mumbled in defeat.

"Put El back on the phone chief," Max said now smiling at how quickly Hopper had folded. He sighed and within a few seconds El was grabbing at the phone. As soon as Max heard the change in breath from huffing and moody to short and eager she spoke. "El? Get your room ready, I'm sleeping over."

El squealed in excitement, "okay!" she said happily, her bright smile evident even through the phone line.

Max couldn't help but grin too, secretly excited that she was about to have her first sleepover as well. "I'll see you in two hours, I've just got to sort out a few things first."

"Okay," El repeated cheerfully. "See you in two hours."

Max said good bye to her new friend and put the phone down, hurrying over to the note pad that sat on the kitchen counter with a pen attached to it. She scrawled out a quick note for Billy, not that he would care, stating that she was staying at a friend's house. Her mom and Neil would be gone for another two days so they would be none the wiser to her unauthorised sleepover.

She then hurried into her bedroom, packing her bag with her pj's, another set of clothes and her general cosmetics before she moved onto more pressing matters. Max pulled out a large shoe box from under her bed and rooted through it, taking out magazines that she had never wanted anyone to know that she read. Glossy front covers of *Vogue*, *Cosmopolitan* and *Seventeen* coming to light as well as catalogues.

Max then moved over to her small pile of videos and took out some of her favourites, stuffing them into her bag along with the magazines. She grabbed a pair of scissors and a Pritt Stick glue and zipped them into the front of her bag with her pencil case before hurrying out of the house and jumping onto her skate board.

It took a good fifteen minutes before she arrived at the Sinclair house, and even though his parents' cars weren't on the drive, Max still opted to sneak around the back of the house and climb up the sloping roof to Lucas's bedroom window.

She popped her head up by the window ledge and smiled to herself, a warmth filling her chest as she spotted Lucas sat at his desk wrapping Christmas presents. "Is that for me?" she called out.

A very girly scream erupted from her boyfriend before he whirled around towards the window with wide terrified eyes. Max burst out laughing, chucking her skate board and bag into Lucas's room before jumping over the ledge.

Lucas huffed in exasperation and rubbed at his sweating brow. "Max what the hell? Are you trying to give me a heart attack?!"

"Is that anyway to greet your girlfriend?" Max teased walking over to Lucas and leaning down to press a quick kiss to his lips. His frown soon disappeared, and he smiled bashfully up at her, his cheeks blushing slightly.

"I feel bad that we haven't told the others we're dating yet." He admitted with a sigh whilst Max rolled her eyes and snorted in amusement.

"I'm pretty sure they know anyway, plus do you want to endure the teasing that Wheeler and El get?" Max asked Lucas casually whilst she hopped up onto his desk and looked over sneakily at the presents he had yet to wrap. Lucas noticed her sly eyes and he quickly covered the rest of the gifts with the wrapping paper.

"Hey, no peeking!" he accused, giving her a smirk when all she did was roll her eyes. "So," Lucas exhaled watching her for a moment with a happy grin, his eyes dancing over her beautiful face, trying to understand how she had chosen *him*. "To what do I owe this pleasure?"

Max grinned back at him playfully before her eyes moved over to the large pin board on his wall. "I need your help with a surprise for El. *And* I'm going to need to borrow a few things."

Lucas frowned and followed her eyes to his pin board that was covered in letters of achievement, photos of the party, and the newest photo of him and Max at the Snow Ball. "How can I help?"

The couple got to work taking the pin board off the wall and clearing it bare. El grabbed her magazines and Lucas riffled through the comics that he was willing on sacrificing for El and his girlfriend's project. They laughed and joked whilst snipping at paper, gluing images together or pinning different things to the board.

They finished the board with five minutes to spare before Hopper was due to arrive and Max smiled down at the masterpiece they had created all in the name of pop culture. "Good job stalker," she smiled with approval. "Your comic sacrifices were not in vain." Max added with a teasing grin as she looked up at her hopeful boyfriend.

"Does that mean I get another kiss?" Lucas asked eagerly, his eyes bright and willing.

They were sat next to each other, crossed leg with the board in front of them. Max shuffled to face Lucas and hummed in thought. "I think you might have earned at least one," she whispered playfully before leaning in and pressing their lips together. Lucas immediately kissed her back, both of them smiling into the kiss before Max leaned back.

"Maybe two kisses?" Lucas asked breathlessly, his eyes still closed and his tone pleading.

Max giggled, feeling oddly fluffy and giddy before moving back in to share another sweet kiss with her boyfriend. She closed her eyes and allowed herself to melt into the kiss, letting it overwhelm her senses for a moment until there was an irate loud beep of a horn from outside.

Lucas groaned, and Max sighed in disappointment as she pulled back, just enough for their foreheads to rest together. "That'll be Hopper. Want to help me get this thing in the car?" she said a little breathy from the kiss but indicating to the board. Lucas didn't say anything but nodded his head in response.

"I haven't got all day Maxine," Hopper called agitatedly from the truck as Max walked out of the front door with Lucas, both of them holding either end of the board whilst Max's bag was slung over her shoulder and her skate board was tucked under her boyfriend's arm.

"You will wait as long as I need you to wait," Max argued back, her breath puffing out slightly from exertion. "It's your punishment for not teaching El the things that are actually *important*."

"I'll have you know that I've been teaching El English, Maths – "

"Yeah, yeah," Max huffed interrupting the chief of police. "Get the door please Hop."

Hopper exhaled deeply, wondering what he had done to deserve this torture. Maxine was almost worse than Wheeler. But at least he didn't have to worry about the fiery red head sneaking into his daughter's bedroom.

He got out of the truck and opened the cab door, waiting impatiently as Max and Lucas heaved in a large pin board laying it across the seats. "What the hell is *that*?" he asked abruptly.

Max straight up pleased with herself when the board was successfully in the truck. "*That* is education." She said smiling proudly before turning to Lucas and squeezing his hand. "Thanks for the help stalker."

"You're welcome Mad Max," Lucas replied with a bashful grin as he handed over her skate board.

Lucas waved off his girlfriend and the chief, a happy sigh escaping his lips as he watched the truck disappear around the corner. He stayed there for a moment thinking of Max and the fluttering feeling in his chest.

"Lukey! Oh Lukey! I'm telling mom and dad you had your girlfriend in your room!" came the very annoying voice of Erica who was standing by the front door, a sassy look on her face as she propped her hands on her hips.

Lucas's shoulders tensed, and he turned around, glaring at his nightmare of a little sister. "What do you want?" he grumbled walking back up the path to the front door.

Erica smirked mischievously, already planning He-Man and Barbie's wedding in her head.

El sat impatiently on the couch, her legs crossed underneath her as she tapped on her knee cap, looking between the closed door and the window. The moment she had gotten off the phone with Max, El had ran into her room quickly making up her bed and neatening up her teddies and books.

Hopper didn't even realise about the sleepover with Max until he asked El why she was making such a big deal of cleaning up. "Of course she invited herself over for a sleepover," he mumbled as he watched his daughter flapping about.

El didn't know how long she had waited until she heard familiar bickering voices coming from outside and she immediately unlocked the bolts with her powers, untangling her limbs and hurrying over to open the door.

"Seriously Hopper I think *you* are going to need to listen in on this lesson," Max was saying, her tone disapproving and concerned.

"No thanks *Maxine*," Hopper said in his gruff voice before puffing out a breath like he was holding something heavy. "I'll be just fine with the television and a beer."

"About that..." Max said grinning slightly. "I kind of need the TV and the VCR as part of my lesson..."

"Jesus Mayfield, anything else you need?! My truck? My *soul*?"

"I'll get back to you Hop on that one." Max answered nonchalantly.

They finally came into view and El beamed with excitement as she waved at her only female friend who responded with a smile.

"Hey El!" Max called cheerfully. El's eyes went onto the large board that Hopper was carrying, and she frowned.

"What is that?" she asked slightly apprehensively, her hazel eyes taking in the colourful images she could see between her dad's large arms.

"That is part of your lesson," Max answered happily, entering the

house and grabbing El's hand pulling her towards the bedroom whilst Hopper reluctantly followed. "It's gonna be fun El I promise." She added with a warm smile that immediately made the Mage relax and nod happily.

El jumped onto her bed, eager to learn everything she could about the things that interested Mike and find out about the people that Max had mentioned on the phone.

Hopper propped the board onto the top of the desk, wiping his brow as he turned to glare at Max. "Anything else your highness?"

Max chucked her bag on the floor and turned to Hopper with a grin, patting his arm. "This is going to be a long night. Why don't you order us a pizza Chief?"

Hopper rolled his eyes and mumbled threats under his breath, but he didn't deny Max of her request. He left the room, closing the bedroom door firmly before heading to the kitchen in desperate need of a beer. He groaned to himself tiredly and grabbed a pizza menu, wondering when he started taking orders from a 13-year-old fiery red head.

In the bedroom Max was kicking off her shoes and pulling videos out of her bag whilst El watched on with interest.

"Okay," Max said breathlessly as she stood back up and put a stack of VHS's onto the desk. "So, I'm not going to say much about Star Wars because I can *assure* you that Mike will want to explain that. He'll literally have a *nerdgasm* explaining it to you."

"A *nerdgasm*?" El asked in confusion. That certainly wasn't one of the words she had seen in her dictionary.

Max snorted, her eyes playful. "You'll see what I mean when you ask Mike about Star Wars." She said with a knowing smile. "All you really need to know about Star Wars right now is that it is set in space, nothing happens here on earth. In fact, there are lots of different planets in it. There is something called the force which is meant to be an equal amount of light and dark, and there are these baddies who want to shift the balance to dark. But as I say, Mike will be *more* than happy to explain this to you."

El nodded eagerly, a smile on her face as she watched Max pick up the first VHS. "Okay," Max started, her voice breathy with excitement. "I'm going to start by telling you some of the best movies of the 80's and some of my favourites that you need to know about."

"We'll start with *Alien*." Max said showing a video cover which had a large egg and a green swirl underneath it. "So, this one actually came out in 1979. But it's rumoured there is going to be more of them *and* it's one of my favourites."

El listened intently as Max explained about seven people on a space ship that discovered a moon that had alien eggs. El's hazel eyes widened in surprise when Max excitedly raved about an alien bursting out a man's chest and how amazingly gruesome it was. "It's *iconic* I swear!" the red head exclaimed happily.

Max put down the video and grabbed the next one. "This is *Mad Max* and it's one of my all-time favourites!"

An inkling of recognition flashed over El's face and she smiled, "Mad Max? That is what the boys call you."

Max nodded proudly at El remembering this piece of information. "Yep. Mad Max is this character played by Mel Gibson, who is totally hot by the way." She admired pointing to the photo of the male actor. "His name is Max Rockatansky, and he's the top pursuit guy in this force patrol team. He goes after this crazy motorbike gang who terrorise people, kill them and destroy property. The gang kill his wife and son, and so he becomes Mad Max! He has this cool supercharged black pursuit car and goes after the baddies. El he literally kills them all in the craziest ways with no remorse. It's *amazing*!"

It didn't take long for El to figure out that Max loved movies that were filled with gore, thrills and mostly horror as she explained her love for *Halloween*, *Friday the 13TH* and *A Nightmare on Elm Street*.

"Freddy Krueger can kill people in their dreams El. In their DREAMS! How crazy is that?!" Max exclaimed, her eyes wide with exhilaration, her arms out in exasperation.

"But Halloween is my favourite. Michael Myers murders his sister when he's a kid and then fifteen years later he returns home to murder more teenagers. He's so freaky El." Max said breathlessly, her eyes still wide with enthusiasm.

"Okay," Max said abruptly clapping her hands together excitedly as she hurried over to the board. "I'm now going to tell you about some of the movies that Mike and the boys like."

El sat up with interest, ready to learn about some of the films that her boyfriend and friends had been talking about.

"So, one of the movies that came out this year was *The Terminator*." Max said pointing to the image of an actor who looked like a robot in his costume. El frowned slightly thinking she remembered seeing the trailer for this movie on the TV. "Terminator is sent back in time from 2029 to 1984 to kill this character Sarah Connor because he knows she will have a son who will lead the battle against the machines in the future."

"There's this line that Terminator uses that you will honestly hear everyone saying, '*I'll be back!*'" Max said doing a terrible accent, but it made El giggle all the same.

"Next on our list," the red head said happily before pointing to a cut out animation of the Ecto-1 vehicle, "is Ghost Busters!" Max grinned, "and this one is totally up the guys street seeing as they dressed up like the characters for Halloween."

"Halloween," El repeated, her voice slightly heavy as she remembered that disastrous day. How she had wanted to go trick or treating in the hopes of catching a glimpse of Mike, how she had ended up being alone in the cabin and then saw Mike upset in the void.

"Ghost Busters is about a team of scientists who lose their positions working in a college and decide to capture ghosts for money instead, using all of this new high-tech equipment." Max explained about the Ghost Busters finding a gateway to another dimension which released evil upon the city. El shivered slightly, reminding herself of the gate she had managed to close and the Mind Flayer that had almost escaped.

Max shuffled over to the other side of the board and pointed to a very handsome looking man. "Okay so this is Harrison Ford, he's in the Star Wars movies that you'll watch this weekend, but he also plays Indiana Jones." She explained looking back at El who nodded in understanding, remembering this Indiana Jones movie being discussed earlier by the boys.

"So, Indiana Jones is a professor of archaeology who is hired by the government to locate these important artefacts. Like in *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, the first movie, he has to locate the Ark of the Covenant before the Nazi's do."

"Nazi's" El asked in confusion, her eyebrows frowning as she tried to keep up with Max.

The red head shook her head in surprise, "oh man, I'll leave history to Hopper," she exhaled before clearing her throat and looking back at the board.

"So, there's two directors in particular you're probably going to want to know for the boys benefit. There's Stephen Spielberg and he directed movies like *E.T.*, *Jaws*, *Close Encounters of The Third Kind* and *Poltergeist*." Max stated before going into an explanation of each movie.

"And you will *need* to know about George Lucas the director and creator of Star Wars. I swear El, if you never met Mike, I'm pretty sure he would marry George Lucas if he got the chance." Max said seriously whilst El giggled, her cheeks blushing, and her smile pleased at the thought of getting to marry Mike.

Max explained a few more movies like *Gremlins* and characters before she pointed to a pretty red headed actress. "If you're going to start high school with us next year then you need to know who Molly Ringwald is. It's like important to teenage girls for some reason." She said rolling her eyes. "Although, her movie *Sixteen Candles* is quite good. I think you'd like it to be honest, it's got all that romance, comedy and teenage angst that most girls like." Max added with a shrug of her shoulders.

The lesson into pop culture was paused when Hopper knocked on the

door with an offering of pizza. Both girls thanked him and sat across from each other on the bed, nibbling at their pizza whilst Max answered El's questions about certain things on the board.

"What's that?" the brunette asked, cocking her head slightly as she focused in on some weird piece of technology.

Max followed her gaze and smiled, "that's an Atari. You know the games we play in the arcade? Well you can kind of play games like that on it, but in your own home." She explained before grabbing another slice of pizza. "I know Lucas has one and I think Mike does too."

Once the pizza was devoured Max decided to move onto music. She hopped off the bed and pointed at some very interesting looking groups of people on the board. "Band wise, I think it's important that you know about *The Beatles*, *Queen*, *The Rolling Stones*, *Led Zeppelin*, *Fleetwood Mac* and *The Clash*."

Max spent some time talking about the iconic bands, what their most popular songs were and why they were so famous. Afterwards she pointed to a photo of a glamorous looking woman and explained to El that she was Madonna. "She is a fashion icon as well El, we all wanna look like her." She admitted.

She then moved onto Cyndi Lauper and it didn't take long for El to realise that she recognised a song from this artist. "We danced to it at the Snow Ball!" she exclaimed excitedly, smiling brightly at Max who laughed and nodded.

"We sure did." She added happily.

"And you knew all of the words," El said remembering the fun the girls had together.

Max blushed and cleared her throat, "which you're not going to tell the boys *right*?" In response El merely nodded with a wide smile.

"The most important thing I want you to learn tonight is about a legend in the making," Max said breathlessly, keeping her bright eyes on El as she pulled out a vinyl from her bag. It was white with a large

photo of a pretty young man.

El squinted slightly to read out the italic writing. "Michael Jackson Thriller," she whispered to herself whilst Max nodded her head enthusiastically.

"Michael Jackson is more than an artist El, he is like a *God*. And this album is insanely brilliant, and I'm not the only one to think so. It's the best-selling album of all time!"

"Can we listen to it?" El asked breathlessly, her interest piqued. Max nodded happily and called in Hopper, begging for his vinyl player. He heaved a sigh but within five minutes the record player was set up and Max was happily pulling out the vinyl disc.

El didn't know what to expect having heard only a minimal amount of music but as soon as the addictive beat started she found herself smiling back at Max. It wasn't long before the girls were laughing and dancing on the bed.

Max left the vinyl on whilst she moved onto the next part of the lesson, introducing El to magazines and explaining the importance of neon colours, excessive make-up, large hooped earrings and back combing.

They pulled out El's limited make up and the cosmetics Max had brought along and giggled foolishly as they tried to give each other a new look. "I promise we'll go shopping soon so we can find clothes that are more suited to you then Hopper and Mike's hand me downs," Max said smiling to herself whilst El attempted to tease her red hair with spray.

Max told El about all the different ways she could listen to music. How Hopper should get MTV or at least buy El a Walkman or Boombox.

"Do you like the music?" Max asked whilst they both bobbed along to *Beat it*.

"Yes," El said grinning ear to ear as Max tied a yellow scrunchy into the brunette's curly locks. "Michael Jackson is bitchin."

Max smiled happily, "my young apprentice, I think your lesson is complete."

AN: SO much research went into this chapter, but I have to let you know that I sadly wasn't alive in the 80's so I'm not a pro at pop culture of this era. I hope I didn't make any mistakes, and if I did I'm sorry!

Stay tuned for part two in which the party will have their sleepover and El will get to use some of the new terms and phrases she has learnt. This may or may not include nerdgasm ;-)

Thank you for reading and **pretty please** let me know what you thought!

2. Part Two

Pop Culture

AN: I'm back with part two! Sorry for the wait but writer's block is very real.

Thank you so much to everyone who has read part one, left a comment and a kudos/favourite. Your feedback means everything to me and really spurs me on to get these stories out to you

I hope you enjoy the second part of the two-shot!

Pop Culture Part Two

Mike hurried around his basement on Saturday, even getting out the vacuum cleaner and the polish, wanting everything to look perfect for his sleepover. Wanting everything to look perfect for *El*.

He grinned to himself wildly, still beyond amazed that she had agreed to be his girlfriend. Guys like him weren't meant to be with girls like her. She was beautiful, smart, powerful and brave and deserved someone who could look after her. All Mike could offer was his heart and he just hoped that it was enough.

Mike was making sure the blanket fort was neat and tidy when he heard the sound of feet on the steps. He looked up to see Nancy walking down into the basement giving him a small smile of acknowledgement.

"What's up?" he asked her, getting up off his knees now that the blanket fort was ready for El. He hadn't laid out his sleeping bag yet, but he was positive he would be putting it right next to the fort.

"Have you got everything you need for tonight?" Nancy asked her brother, sitting down on the arm of the old worn couch.

"Yeah mom left money for us to order in and we've got enough snacks. Plus, Dustin said he'd bring some stuff too." Mike said, his eyes already darting around the room wondering what he could clean

up next.

Nancy was fidgeting with her skirt and Mike couldn't help but roll his eyes, he could tell she was stalling. "What is it Nance?"

She looked up at him, her cheeks blushing slightly. "Well I know Hopper and mom think I'm chaperoning your sleepover," she began before coughing awkwardly. "But I was thinking...well Jonathan wants to take me out on a date and then I was going to invite him over." She explained, her face turning red whilst Mike cringed at what the teenagers were planning on doing when they got back to the house.

He immediately averted his dark amber eyes to the floor feeling uncomfortable. "Okay," he mumbled trying to grasp onto what she was saying.

"I won't tell Hopper or mom that I wasn't here," Nancy quickly explained. "But would that be okay? Will you be okay here on your own with your friends?"

Mike looked up at Nancy, suddenly her date night sounded like the best plan in the world. It meant he would have the house to himself for most of the night to host his friends and girlfriend. "Yeah we'll be fine here," he told her quickly with a small smile.

Nancy sighed and looked up at him, "are you sure? I mean we'll probably be back at like 11, but um, we'll probably go upsta - "

"That's fine!" Mike interrupted her quickly, not needing to know *anything* more about her date night.

Nancy smiled in relief, "thanks Mike, I'll tell Jonathan I can go." She said happily, jumping up from the couch before halting to look at him and the basement. "It's very clean down here," she stated, a smirk starting to form on her lips. "Any reason why you've put in so much effort?"

"Good bye Nancy!" Mike said in response staring at her with a flat look whilst she chuckled and gave him a little wave before ascending the stairs.

Three hours later and Lucas and Dustin were the first to arrive, both of them squabbling over which '*Star Wars*' moment El was going to like best.

"She's a girl, she's gonna like Leia and Han Solo," Lucas said in a bored tone, his footsteps on the basement stairs mixing with the loud thuds that Dustin was making. Mike looked up from the couch, his knee jiggling nervously as he waited for El to arrive.

Dustin scoffed, "just because she's a girl doesn't mean that she is going to automatically like Leia and Han! Oh man, I can't *wait* for her to discover that Luke and Leia are twins! And for Darth Vader to tell Luke he's his father!" His enthusiasm was evident, and Mike couldn't help but smile, equally excited for his girlfriend to discover all of the secrets that '*Star Wars*' had to offer.

"What confuses me is that Vader has Leia captive, is even *alone* with her in *A New Hope*, and yet he doesn't realise Leia is his daughter. But he can *sense* that Luke is his son!" Dustin said bewildered as he jumped onto the couch next to Mike, the movement making the Paladin bounce slightly in annoyance.

"Maybe it's because Luke has the force," Lucas added in, sitting down on the other side of Mike who couldn't help but join into the conversation too.

"Oh come on, Leia definitely has the force too. Like how she sensed Luke's call for help in *The Empire Strikes Back* and the fact that Vader says he'll turn Leia to the dark side if Luke doesn't." Mike argued, his words coming out enthusiastically as he discussed his favourite movie saga with his friends.

He was honestly glad of the distraction, it stopped his body from shaking with nerves whilst he waited for El. It was still hard to believe that she was coming to the sleepover, and Mike felt like any second he was waiting for the other shoe to drop. Maybe Hopper would change his mind?

There was movement again on the stairs and Mike looked up so quickly he was sure he had caused a crick in his neck. When he saw it was Will he was mixed with a sense of disappointment that it wasn't

El, but also relief that his best friend could finally come and settle the debate between Dustin and Lucas.

"What have I missed?" Will chuckled noticing the exasperated look on Mike's face. In an instance he was wrapped into the Star Wars debate about whether Leia was a Jedi or not.

Mike watched his best friend for a moment, finding it hard to comprehend that only a few weeks ago Will was possessed by the Mind Flayer, doing its bidding and almost dying in the process.

Mike had seen things he hoped that someday he would forget, but he knew he never would. Those kind of memories scarred your mind as if they were burned to your brain, always there, a constant reminder of the pain they had all experienced.

He had no idea how Will was coping with it all so well, but Mike couldn't help but be thankful that Will didn't remember a lot of the things the Mind Flayer made him do whilst possessed. All that mattered was that they all had their best friend back, and he could *finally* start living again.

The sound of the doorbell ringing brought Mike immediately out of his complex thoughts and he jumped up from the couch, his breath catching and a nervous sweat starting to develop on his brow. The debate between the boys ended abruptly and they all laughed at Mike's over the top reaction, but he didn't pay them any mind. Instead he rushed up the stairs like his life depended on it.

"I'll get it!" Mike shouted as he passed Nancy and Jonathan in the kitchen, the couple, '*not yet a couple*' were making gooey eyes at each other whilst whispering over hot cocoa. Nancy didn't even bother to respond to him, before she had even blinked he was out of the kitchen and taking a deep breath before opening the front door.

Mike couldn't contain his smile as his gaze immediately fell onto El, not even noticing the two other people standing beside her. She was wearing a deep red knitted sweater and a pair of black denim jeans with her curly hair fixed into two neat braids. She looked so adorable that Mike felt his heart immediately melt on the spot.

He exhaled a breath of relief that she was finally here, a dopey smile quirking up on his lips and aching his cheeks. Mike didn't take his eyes off her, his heart singing at the way she beamed back at him, her eyes happy and bright and her smile wide and beautiful.

Mike would do anything to see her this happy. Absolutely anything to make her smile like this and to hear her laugh. She was single handily the best thing to have ever happened to him and he *knew* with every fibre of his being that he would never let her go.

"So...are you two just gonna stare at each other?" came another female voice that made both Mike and El blink and come out of their intimate moment.

He turned, realising that Max was also stood there, her hands on her hips and an amused smirk on her face. Mike immediately blushed at being caught staring so intensely at his girlfriend. The pink blush only became bright red when he heard a gruff voice being cleared and finally saw Hopper stood behind the girls looking incredibly exasperated.

"Maxine has a point Wheeler," the chief barked ignoring the way Max glared back at him for saying her full name. "It's December, you really going to let us freeze our asses off whilst you make gooey eyes at El?"

Mike was positive he would set on fire any second by how embarrassed he suddenly felt. He could feel the heat radiating off his body, it was probably enough to keep the whole of Hawkins warm this winter. He coughed awkwardly and shook his head quickly. "N-No!" he exclaimed, trying to ignore the way his palms were sweating. "Come in," he croaked, standing back from the door to allow El and Max inside.

Hopper paused by the door way and Mike slowly looked up at him, suddenly feeling intimidated by the chief's height. "Er...chief? Do you want to come inside?" he asked feebly.

The tall man leaned against the door frame and shook his head, "no Wheeler. But I do want to have a quick word with Nancy," he said giving Mike a pointed look before the teenager quickly nodded and

hurried to the kitchen to grab his sister. Max and El stayed in the hallway both of them curiously watching the scene.

Nancy appeared a second later with a harassed Mike and gave the chief a warm smile. "Hey, Hop," she said in greeting.

"Hi Nancy," Hopper exhaled nodding his head to Jonathan who was lingering by the kitchen door. The teenager smiled in greeting and gave him a small wave in return. The chief returned his eyes onto the older Wheeler child and sighed. "I just wanted to check that you are keeping an eye on these lot tonight?"

Nancy nodded and smiled, "of course." Mike was immediately thankful for his sister's loyalty, even though she was also benefiting from this agreement. "I'll make sure they don't go to bed too late and that they...*behave* themselves." Nancy added sparing a smirk to her brother who glared at her in response, taking back his internal gratefulness to his sister.

Hopper slumped slightly in relief and nodded, "that's good." He answered before turning his gaze onto El who was watching on intently. He smiled at her warmly, his eyes softening. "Have fun okay kid? I'll be back for you about one tomorrow."

El grinned at her adoptive father. "Thanks dad. See you tomorrow." she said happily, holding onto her overnight bag.

"Thanks for the lift chief!" Max called to him before wandering off towards the basement. Hopper sighed and rolled his eyes at the back of the Zoomer's head before she quite literally sped off. The chief gave them all a final nod before walking back towards the cruiser.

Mike exhaled a sigh of relief and closed the front door, turning around and jumping slightly when he realised El was stood there alone. The hallway seemed to have been cleared of everyone else and Mike was suddenly aware of how little space there was between them.

"Hi El," he choked out, his face warming up again as he took in her beauty.

"Hi Mike," El replied softly, scooting slightly closer to him so that the tips of their sneakers touched. Her breath was mingling with his and he suddenly felt faint.

"I missed you," El exhaled, leaning forward to rest her forehead against his, shutting her eyes and exhaling deeply. Mike gulped nervously and closed his eyes too, allowing himself to just breathe her in for a moment. He immediately felt his body relax, having her this close was always welcoming to his heart.

"I missed you too," Mike whispered back, gently nuzzling his nose with hers before sighing happily that she was finally here, back at his home where she belonged.

Mike felt El's eyelashes flutter against his cheeks and he opened his eyes, his gaze immediately locking onto her beautiful hazel orbs. He was so drawn in by her he could barely breathe. He felt the distance between them become less and less until –

"Mike!" Nancy interrupted, her arms crossed and a smirk on her face as she lingered in the hallway. The young couple broke from each other's arms and turned to look at her; El's face was blotchy from her pink blush and Mike's were purely filled with annoyance.

"What?" he nagged in response.

"I thought you were hosting a sleepover?" Nancy teased in response, nudging her head towards the basement door.

Mike cleared his throat and nodded, "um, yeah. We're going now." He mumbled, taking El's hand in his and leading her towards the stairs. He couldn't contain his disappointment for not having got to kiss his girlfriend, and when he glanced at El he saw a similar expression on her face.

The moment they reached the top of the stairs and were no longer in sight of Nancy or Jonathan, Mike quickly leaned in and pressed a quick but soft kiss to El's lips. When he pulled away it was to find her smiling happily in surprise, her eyes bright and joyful.

Mike exhaled in contentment, amazed that not only could he kiss El,

not only was she *here* back in her true home, but now he was getting to have a sleepover with her and introduce her to the best movies ever made.

An hour later the party were taking turns on the Atari, Mike being surprised when El had pointed at the gaming system and named it correctly. He smiled and nodded, watching on proudly when she gave it a go with Max whilst the boys cheered for them both.

They were all sat around the couch, Max and Lucas lounging on the floor, eating French fries and debating which arcade game was best with Dustin and Will when El turned to Mike with a question on her lips. "Will you tell me what's happening in Star Wars if I don't understand?"

"Of course!" He answered with a breathless smile. Mike reached for El's hand, entwining their fingers before looking back up at his girlfriend with excited eyes. "I really think you're going to like it. The Imperial Force who are under control by Darth Vader and Darth Sidious hold Princess Leia hostage as part of their attempt to destroy the rebellion against the Galactic Empire."

Mike was in full on nerd mode, his eyes wide with enthusiasm and his words coming out quicker the more he spoke. "Luke Skywalker and Han Solo who is the captain of the Millennium Falcon work together with Chewbacca, and two droids called R2-D2 and C-3PO to rescue Princess Leia and help with the rebellion. And this is just *A New Hope!* In – "

Before Mike could say anything else he realised that El was giggling at him, her palm against her mouth to try and cover the amused grin on her lips. He blinked in confusion for a moment before taking in the mirth and happiness in her eyes and twinkle of her laughter.

"Are you making fun of me?!"

El giggled a little deeper, shaking her head and grinning ear to ear. "No," she managed to say despite how desperately she was trying to keep in her laughter.

Mike beamed, feeling oddly proud that he could make her smile and giggle this much, even if it was at his expense. He tried to give her a mock stern expression and shook his head, "El you know friends don't lie."

El bit her lower lip to contain herself and then took a deep breath, all the while still smiling. She looked back up at Mike, her eyes alive and bright. "You just had a nerdgasm," she stated before giggling at the confused look on her boyfriend's face.

Mike's cheeks blushed, "I had a *what?*"

"A nerdgasm." El repeated, this time more sure and confident in her words. Mike blinked and looked over to where laughter was coming from Max, she leaned over and high fived with El.

"I *told* you he'd have one!" the red head teased grinning smugly before reached for another French fry and going back to her argument with Dustin over Pac Man.

El was giggling again and Mike decided to let the issue drop, too enthralled by how adorable his girlfriend was. Smiling widely with glee he pushed forward and started to tickle her, making her burst into laughter. She threw a pillow at him in response and within seconds the whole party was involved in a pillow fight, running around the basement and trying to narrowly avoid El's levitated cushions whilst Dustin shouted that she was cheating.

They all landed on a heap of pillows, clutching their sides from their laughter and sweating from their fight. "Should we get in our PJ's and start the movie marathon?" Will asked the group once they had caught their breaths. There was an excited murmur of responses before Max and El grabbed their pyjamas from their bags and went towards the bathroom.

Before El left she turned to Mike and smirked, "I'll be back." She stated before giggling and hurrying to the bathroom after Max.

Mike blinked in surprise and then snorted in amusement as he turned to the boys all of them looking dumbfounded.

"Did she just quote Terminator?" Lucas asked in amazement.

Mike looked over to the closed bathroom door and sighed, his heart fluttering and his palms sweaty. "She did."

"Okay El, are you ready for this?" Dustin asked excitedly from where he was lounging in the arm chair, his legs flung over the side as he got himself comfy whilst Mike put *A New Hope* into the VCR.

"Yes." El exhaled with enthusiasm, a wide smile on her face. She was sat in the middle of the couch, with Will on one side of her and the other side saved for Mike who quickly took his seat. He smiled at her lovingly when she laced their fingers together and snuggled up to his body, her head resting against his shoulder. Despite Mike's red cheeks he didn't respond to Dustin and Lucas teasing him over the Paladin and Mage's closeness.

Lucas wasn't one to talk, he was leaning against the couch with Max, both of them secretly holding hands under the blanket strewn across their legs. El wasn't one to be fooled though and could easily see the glances and bashful smiles that Lucas and Max were sharing.

Will handed out the snacks that the party had gathered, Dustin was eating candy, Lucas and Max were sharing potato chips whilst El was in charge of the popcorn that her, Mike and Will were munching on.

The movie began and El almost jumped out of her seat when the black screen suddenly erupted with large print words saying, 'STAR WARS' and a loud theme tune began in sync with the title.

She felt immediately overwhelmed as scripture of the background story reeled onto the screen, and her hazel eyes moved back and forth trying to keep up. Noticing her frustration Mike lowered his head slightly so his lips were almost touching El's ear as he whispered the words that he had memorised a long time ago.

El smiled, keeping her eyes on the screen but feeling a blush creeping up her cheeks at Mike's proximity. His breath was warm against her ear lobe and made a shiver run down her spine. Once the words were over and the story could properly begin, El found herself

disappointed when Mike lifted his head back up to watch the movie.

Her discontentment didn't linger as she found herself getting interested by the story. El finally put a name to a face with Princess Leia, feeling slightly jealous of how pretty she was and blushing when Mike whispered that El looked like her. She took this to be a very good thing and beamed back up at him, leaning in to press a soft kiss to the top of his nose that made Mike chuckle.

She was captivated by Luke and the whole idea of the Jedi. "Am I a Jedi?" El asked out loud, all of her friends and boyfriend turning to look at her. She immediately flickered her gaze to her feet, wondering if she had said something embarrassing but then her friends erupted into speech.

"Hell yeah you're a Jedi!" Dustin called between a mouthful of candy.

"You're the best Jedi we know!" Will grinned.

"El Skywalker," Lucas teased, winking at her when she laughed.

"You're *better* than a Jedi." Max countered with a smile at her new best friend. El beamed back, feeling so lucky to have this particular girl in her life. She leaned forward and squeezed Max's hand, both of the girls sharing a knowing smile about their lesson in pop culture and how much confidence it had brought El.

"You *definitely* have the force." Mike added with a happy grin when El turned her attention back onto her boyfriend. Her eyes were large and imploring as she took in his pride and his love for her. She immediately cuddled up closer to his side and tried not to smile too much when Mike put his arm around her, allowing her to rest her head on his t-shirt laden chest.

El swooned when Han Solo appeared and giggled at Mike's annoyed reaction when Max turned to her and winked, "I told you Harrison Ford was hot!"

"He looks better in this than as Indiana Jones." El commented, not realising for a moment the way all of the boys quickly whipped their heads over to her in shock.

"You know who Indiana Jones is?" Mike asked in amazement, his mouth slightly open in surprise.

"Uh huh," El beamed with pride. "He is a Professor of Archaeology who is hired by the government to locate important artefacts." She recited Max's words and then shared a wink with her best friend who nodded and grinned approvingly.

El smiled up at her boyfriend before settling back down against his chest and continued to watch the movie. Mike shared a look with the boys, all of them startled by El's knowledge before they too got back into 'Star Wars'.

"Are Han Solo and Princess Leia in love?" El asked after Han and Leia fought and he said the line "*Wonderful girl. Either I'm going to kill her or I'm beginning to like her.*"

Dustin gasped in surprise, his eyes comically wide. "El how the hell do you know that *already*?!"

El simply giggled while the group all stared at her, Max was amused by the look on the boys faces, they were incredibly dumbfounded by El's perception of the characters that hadn't that long ago been introduced to each other.

"They are teasing each other," El explained with a pleased grin, especially at the way Mike was looking at her like he had won the lottery. "They are flirting."

"Nothing gets past my girl," Max stated proudly and laughed with El as the girls playfully high fived each other.

"You're amazing," Mike whispered to El, his eyes bright with adoration as he took in her happy smile and the glint in her eyes. She was *beautiful*.

The moment that Han Solo and Luke Skywalker were presented with medals for destroying the Death Star by Princess Leia, El immediately asked if Mike could put on the next movie which he did eagerly, knowing it was his favourite.

El knew that '*The Empire Strikes Back*' was Mike's favourite of the saga

and so made every effort to focus on the action and get back into the story. She found herself loving the Han Solo and Princess Leia romance and grinning when she saw Yoda for the first time. She suddenly realised why he had put on that funny voice when showing her the figurine.

El turned to Mike, surprised to see he was already staring at her, his eyes dreamy and his smile beautiful and soft. She grinned back at him, both of them recalling the memory of him showing her his room and all of his prized possessions.

Mike's hand was on El's shoulder and he drew gentle circles with his thumb whilst she gasped at the betrayal of Han and Leia by Lando. He secretly enjoyed how she buried her head into his shirt when she couldn't watch Han Solo being frozen because it was too upsetting. When Han and Leia said their iconic love lines, Mike leaned down just enough to brush his lips against the top of El's head. She peaked up at him and smiled softly.

The whole room was tense as Darth Vader and Luke Skywalker duelled, all of the party's eyes flicking quickly from the screen and then to El, wanting to catch her reaction when Vader announced the truth of Luke's parentage.

"No. I am your father."

"NO!" El gasped loudly, her own words almost louder than Luke's reaction making the rest of the party grin and laugh warmly. El didn't seem to mind though about the others laughing however because she was still so consumed in the story. She didn't even question if the statement was true and kept her eyes on the screen, shushing Dustin when he tried to explain that this was the biggest reveal in cinematic history.

"Snack and bathroom break!" Max exclaimed the moment the credits of the movie came up. El pouted slightly, already desperate to watch the final instalment in the '*Star Wars*' franchise.

Mike saw her inner turmoil and smiled softly, rubbing her shoulder gently to get her attention. The moment her expressive eyes landed on his own he grinned happily. "Eggos?" he suggested knowing she

couldn't resist. El smiled, some of her tension bleeding out as she nodded her head excitedly.

"Come on," Mike chuckled, getting up from the couch and taking her hand. He pulled her up and they made their way up the stairs whilst the rest of the party dispersed, either wanting bathroom breaks or to stretch their legs. It sounded like Dustin and Lucas were play fighting by the time Mike and El made it into the kitchen.

Mike immediately set about making the Eggos, walking over to the freezer to grab the box whilst El jumped up onto one of the counters and started to swing her legs absentmindedly.

"I really like *Star Wars*." She spoke softly, a warm smile on her face as she watched Mike placing the Eggos in the toaster before putting away the box and closing the freezer.

"Yeah?" he asked happily, walking over to her.

El nodded and then grinned as Mike leaned against the counter next to her, his hip slightly digging into the wood. She appraised him for a moment, amazed how much taller he was getting than her. And not just El, Mike was taller than the boys and seemed to keep growing. She wondered how long that would happen for and if he would get so tall that she wouldn't be able to kiss him, she hoped that wouldn't *ever* be the case. But then of course she could always just levitate...

Mike sighed gently, his eyes flickering over El's face whilst his lips quirked into an adorable smile. "I love having you here. I love having you *home*."

"Home." El repeated, keeping her eyes on Mike's as she reached for his hand and squeezed it gently, loving the feel of his warm skin against hers. They continued to stare at each other, both overwhelmed by the intensity of their love and their feelings for one another.

El shuffled closer to the edge of the counter and Mike leaned down, his forehead brushing against hers as he kissed her gently, their lips soft but firm as they savoured every second. The moment was abruptly ended by the Eggos popping up in the toaster and the

sudden noise made both El and Mike jump. They laughed it off, pleased grins on their faces as Mike transferred the Eggos to a plate and El hopped down from the counter.

"Here you go," Mike said happily as he handed the plate over, all the while still grinning foolishly.

"Thank you," El replied, kissing his cheek and feeling the warm blush erupting on his skin underneath her lips. She pulled away slowly, giving Mike a playful smirk before taking his hand and pulling him along to the basement.

El was soon enraptured by *'Return of the Jedi'*, especially when Leia came to rescue Han. "Bitchin," she commented with a smirk when Leia took off her disguise and kissed a very confused Han Solo.

Mike had his arm back around El's shoulders and he pulled her closer whilst she wrapped her own arm around his waist. He smiled to himself, laying his cheek against her curly locks and closed his eyes for a second, just taking in this moment of being young, carefree again and so in love.

The boys all grinned between them when it was revealed that Luke and Leia were twins, El was gobsmacked and sighed in relief as she explained to the boys that she was worried Luke had a crush on the princess.

El clutched to Mike during Luke and Vader's battle, her heart in her throat as they thought over the dark and light inside of them. Her eyes were moving quickly again, going from father to son in captivation. She was relieved when Darth Sidious was killed but then frowned mournfully when it resulted in Vader's death.

"Is he going to take off his mask?" El whispered slightly nervously as Luke approached his wheezing father.

"It's okay," Mike whispered soothingly to her, rubbing her back gently whilst she clutched onto his t-shirt. "He doesn't look *that* bad."

El had to admit she had definitely seen a lot worse in her life than the

appearance of who was once Anakin Skywalker.

Her smile was soon back when Han and Leia shared another romantic moment and Luke returned, cremating his father's body whilst the Jedi masters watched on. The music built up again and the credits started.

The sky outside was pitch black and the party had heard Nancy and Jonathan returning an hour before, although neither group had disturbed the other.

"So, what did you think young Padawan?" Max asked turning to El who was slightly emotional over the ending of the movie.

"I thought it was amazing." El said smiling, feeling so immensely pleased that she could share a passion with her friends, that she understood what they were now talking about.

"I knew you'd like it," Mike commented with a grin, his eyes warm and lingering on El even when she was distracted by their friends asking her what her favourite parts were. She agreed with her boyfriend that *'The Empire Strikes Back'* was the best in the series, which then caused a debate between the party. But it was a debate that El could take part in and she found herself smiling throughout.

An hour later everyone was settled in their sleeping bags whilst El was tucked up in the blanket fort with Mike just on the edge. Their arms were both bent on the floor so that their hands could stay entwined. They both lay on their side so that they were facing each other, their eyes glued to one another.

"I love having you here," Mike whispered gently, his voice quiet so that he wouldn't wake up the rest of the party who were already asleep.

"I love being here...with you." El replied, her eyes soft as she stared into the dark orbs in front of her. Despite the darkness of the amber, she could see everything in those beautiful eyes, every emotion and every thought. "Maybe we could do this again?" she added in a delicate tone.

Mike grinned, his cheek slightly squished into his pillow but he nodded. "I would love that. There's so many movies I want to show you."

El smiled back, her heart pounding loudly as she stared at the boy who had given her this chance of life. "I want to watch Gremlins with you, and Ghostbusters and E.T."

Mike's eyebrows raised in surprise and he smiled tenderly, staying quiet for a moment as he processed his thoughts. "How do you know about all of those movies? And quotes from Terminator?"

El blushed, thankful that the darkness of the basement was able to hide most of the red in her cheeks. Her gaze lowered from Mike's in embarrassment and she stared instead at their laced fingers.

"I asked Max to teach me because...because I wanted to impress you. I wanted to know about all the movies you love." She mumbled quietly.

There was silence for a moment as Mike took in her words and then El felt him shuffle closer, looking up just in time to see his closed eyelids before his lips were on hers in a loving and sweet kiss. She hummed in contentment, allowing the feeling of happiness and joy to flood into her veins. Every kiss with Mike was perfect, she had realised that from the second one at the Snow Ball. She hadn't truly understood the importance of their first kiss until she started watching Soap Operas. You only kissed someone if you *really* liked them, and Mike *loved* her. And she loved him.

El opened her eyes slowly as Mike pulled away just enough to rest his forehead with hers. Their noses bumped, and she grinned nudging her own against his and making Mike chuckle softly.

"El, you don't need to try and impress me okay? I love you for who you are, no movie is going to change that." Mike whispered, his tone loving and full of adoration for the amazing girl who was trying to find her place in the world. "But you know if you ever want to know anything or understand something I will always explain it. And so will Max and the boys."

El nodded and smiled, "I know." She exhaled getting lost in Mike's eyes for a moment. "Max was a good teacher."

Mike pretended to be aghast and opened his mouth wide in shock whilst El giggled, trying to be as quiet as she could manage. "Are you saying MadMax is a better teacher than *me*?!"

El grinned which in turn made Mike grin, immediately breaking through his poor acting job. "No," she teased shaking her head. "You both have different ways of teaching. You are *both* good."

"She's just being modest Wheeler, I was a *way* better teacher." Came the mumbled sleepy voice of Max from over on the couch.

Mike and El snorted in amusement, not at all surprised that they had been overheard.

"It's probably because Mike's too distracted teaching El." Dustin yawned, weighing in his opinion before turning over.

"No way, Max was much better. She made a board and everything of pop culture references." Lucas added crossing his arms behind his head.

"Thanks stalker." Max said, her grin evident from her tone of voice. "And thank you for letting me cut up your comics for the cause."

"You cut up his comics?!" Will gasped in shock.

The party was soon in a debate in the dark basement about whether or not comics were too sacred to ever be cut up. This led to Dustin teasing that Lucas must *really* like Max if he let her ruin his comic books.

Whilst this argument was happening, Mike snuck into the pillow fort when El patted the space beside her, both of them rearranging their limbs so that they could fit in easier.

El snuggled up to Mike, moving her head onto his chest whilst he engulfed her body in his arms and pulled her closer. He rested his cheek against her forehead and nuzzled her slightly as he closed his eyes and smiled, listening to the sound of the party bickering and

sighing happily.

"I love you," Mike whispered before kissing her forehead softly.

"I love you too," El replied tiredly with a gentle smile, snuggling closer to her boyfriend. "Good night Mike."

"Night El."

AN: Annndddd we're done! I'm sorry that this wasn't my best work, but I hope you were able to enjoy it.

My next update will be on Part of Your World and fingers crossed that will be out some point tomorrow :-D

Thank you so much for reading!

If anyone's on Instagram and wants to come and find me, I'm fangirlingstrangerthings011 or on Tumblr fangirlingstrangerthings :-D